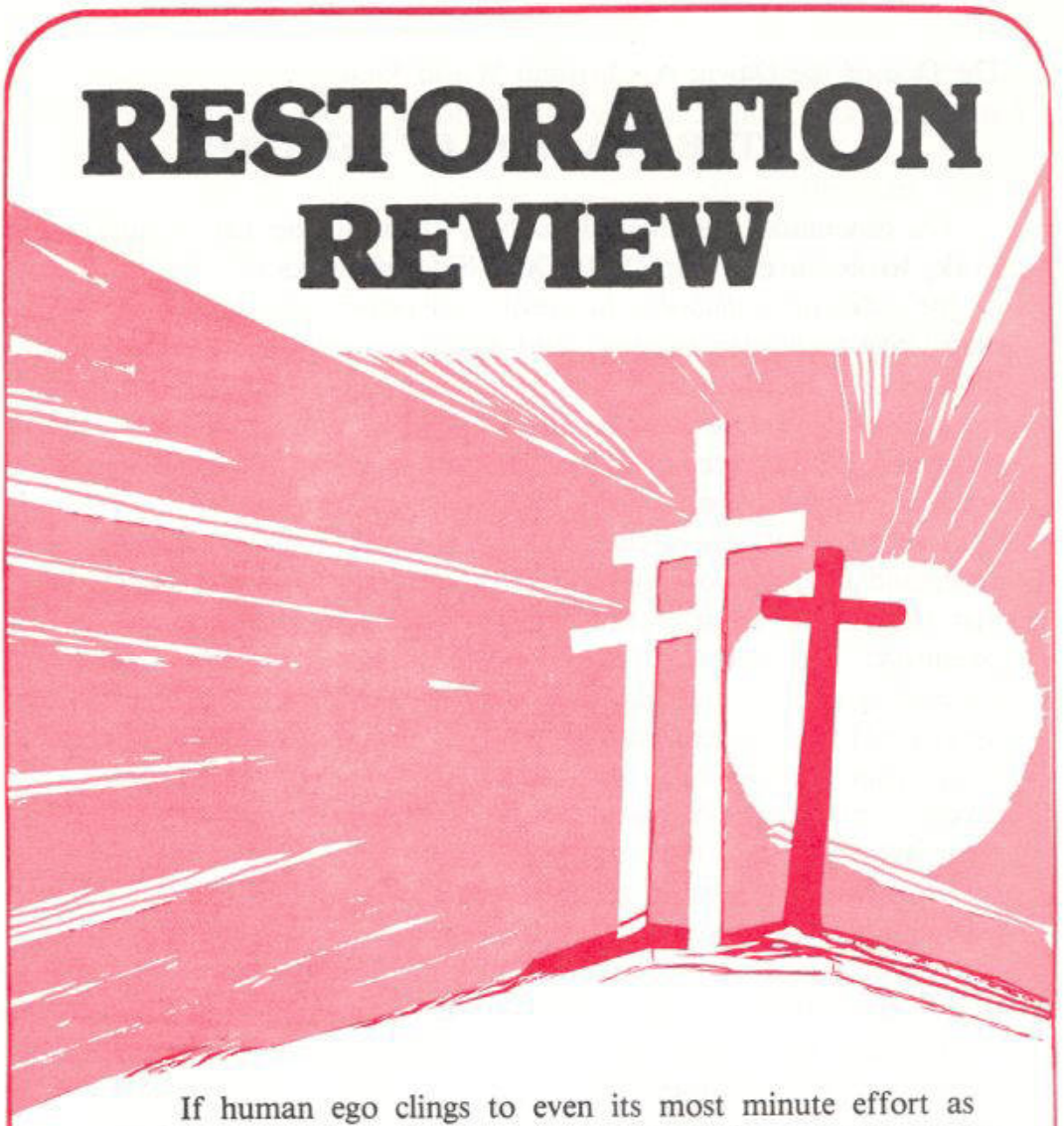
RESTORATION REVIEW



If human ego clings to even its most minute effort as part payment for salvation, the soul will ignore grace and exalting itself to the throne of saviorhood, will usurp the crown that belongs to grace alone.

—Donald Grey Barnhouse

See: **The Tragedy of Religion**
Page 302

Also In This Issue:

What 48 Members of the Church of Christ Believe

Revolution or Evolution?

Vol. 26, No. 6 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **June 1984**

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The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View. . .

THE TRAGEDY OF RELIGION

A generation ago Morris Cohen, then of the City College of New York, wrote an essay on "The Dark Side of Religion." Assuming the role of the *advocatus diaboli* (the devil's advocate), he set out to show how destructive to human progress and happiness religion has often been, even though he realized that religion also has its good side. I am doing something like that in this essay in that I intend to show how often religion is a tragedy, but I too recognize that religion is often "the abundant life" that Jesus of Nazareth came to give mankind.

Cohen points to witchcraft, magic, superstition, emotionalism, ignorance, and even immorality as part of the ugly fruit of religion. He notes that the church through the ages has hindered the progress of physics, chemistry, and medicine by persecuting pioneer scientists. Religion has fostered ignorance and superstition by deliberately keeping people in the dark, making it evident that it had no interest in the truth. The magician brings rain by rubbing a stick, he says, while the priest brings rain by saying a prayer. Holy water wards off devils and meteorological phenomena are portents to warn mankind against sin.

As for religion being an anti-moral force, Cohen points to the priests, popes, and cardinals that have led rapacious and licentious lives, noting that even Dante, a faithful son of the church, put popes in hell. It was the church that conducted the Inquisition and launched "holy" wars. Even a lovely psalm that begins with "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept" ends with "Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" Religion more often than not has been cruel, he insists, pointing to the fact that it has no qualms about hating, persecuting, and murdering heretics and dissenters. He admits that religion has always given lip service to love and brotherhood, but it has always divided people into sects, while science and education have united them. This is why Cohen finds more wisdom and courage in honest doubt than in the creeds of men.

Cohen finds it predictable that the church would oppose birth control, for orthodoxy always has priority over the alleviation of poverty and suffering. In fact, he says, there is not a single loathsome practice that has not at some time been regarded as a religious duty, whether assassination, thuggery, self-torture, sacred prostitution, or even human sacrifice, including children.

Well, one can do what Cohen has done, for religion obviously has its dark side. He could even add, as the evangelist Billy Sunday had a way of saying as he slapped his knee with his Bible, “Remember that it was religion that killed Jesus Christ!”

My purpose herein is not to refute Cohen’s thesis, which one can do by showing that there is both bad religion and good religion, or false religion and true religion. True religion fosters human progress, alleviates suffering, builds charitable institutions, educates and liberates, and bears the fruit of love, peace, and joy. Good religion has not failed man, man has failed good religion. There may be popes in hell, as Dante says, but there may be some in heaven, too.

My purpose is rather to identify a problem within religion, even *good* religion, the understanding of which may make it even better. I refer to it as the tragedy of religion. Religion is a tragedy whenever it is a way of self-salvation. It can be a good and true religion and still have this tragic element. One may reverence God, respect his fellow man, and live a life full of good works, and yet suffer the tragedy of trying to save himself, even while praying for God’s help.

In his *Systematic Theology* Paul Tillich names four ways of self-salvation — legalistic, ascetic, mystical, and sacramental (which includes doctrinal and emotional ways). They all fail in their efforts, he insists, and only add to man’s anxieties in that he does not have the resources within him to attain the reunion with God that he seeks.

Tillich sees legalistic ways of salvation as very attractive to man in that they are based upon a law of commandments, to which he can respond with some success. Law reveals to man his true nature, which is alienated from God, and it does so through commandments. Man thus sees his estrangement or his sinful condition. Seeking salvation by keeping commandments is always a catastrophe, for man can never obey them sufficiently.

Since man believes he has the strength to act, in spite of the bondage of his will, and thus attain what he has lost, legalism becomes “an almost irresistible temptation,” as Tillich puts it. Man’s predicament is that he sees the commandments (especially the commandment of love) as necessary but their fulfillment impossible. This caused Paul to cry out at one point in his life, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death” (Rom. 7:24).

Legalism is almost irresistible, the theologian assures us, and most of us can attest to this from our own experience. We may never completely escape legalism, appealing as it is, but we must come to see, as Tillich urges, that love, which is the basis of all law, cannot be commanded and cannot be obeyed. Love is a given, the gift of God's grace. It comes only through gratitude of what God has done for us. The strongest antidote to legalism is the great truth of Rom. 5:5: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."

But it is such a temptation to seek salvation by *doing something*, and to measure our goodness by what we have done rather than by what God has done for us. We distort the picture, Tillich warns, when we allow the New Being to be substituted for *performance*, whether ritual or intellectual. The ascetic saves himself by escaping as many of the objects of desire as possible, thus avoiding the lawlessness of concupiscence. He obeys the law through self-restriction. It is tempting for one to suppose he moves closer to God (and away from his feeling of estrangement) when he voluntarily denies himself of something good in itself, such as marriage.

While Tillich believes true religion must have a mystical element, such as the "felt presence of God," mysticism becomes a way of self-salvation when it seeks reunion with God through bodily and mental exercises.

So with sacramental, emotional, and doctrinal ways of self-salvation. The search for true reunion with God is distorted when one relies upon sacraments performed by a priest or the "true doctrines" formulated by the church. One falsely seeks security in pietism, fundamentalism, and revivalism. It is all made too easy, such as "obedience to the word of God," which is usually a demand for conformity to some sectarian interpretation. Emotionalism does this by provoking the desire for emotions which are not genuine but artificially created.

Whether or not we find Tillich's analysis helpful, he is surely on target when he concludes that "The personal encounter with God and the reunion with him are the heart of all genuine religion." He says this presupposes the presence of a transforming power within man, a power that turns him toward the ultimate and away from all preliminary concerns. This power within man that would lift him above the artificial is God's grace. This is disturbed when anything is imposed upon man's spiritual life, whether by himself or someone else, that is artificial. It is this that produces anxiety, fanaticism, and the intensification of works. This is the failure of all ways of self-salvation.

And this is the tragedy of religion, whether the animist, the Pharisee, or the Mormon: *the presumption that somehow man can save himself,* if not by building systems then by erecting temples. Tillich is surely right that the temptation to "do it for oneself" is so irresistible that the legalism of self-salvation pervades all religion. Our problem is that we do not keep ourselves sufficiently open for an invasion of the grace of God. Pride gets in our way, *self-elevation* Augustine called it, the sin of turning to ourselves instead of to God.

Sinful pride (self-salvation) separates us from God; grace reconciles us to God. Grace means total forgiveness for our total guilt. It is not that grace enables us to save ourselves. We can only accept with a humble and contrite heart what God has done for us. Grace has to be unconditional, otherwise it would not be grace. This is the tragic failure of self-salvation. It cannot accept unconditional grace. It must help God do it!

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, Tit. 2:11 assures us. This is the glory of religion. God's grace is God's presence in our lives, and this is the only answer there is to all our fears and anxieties. Grace means that this spiritual presence cannot be produced by us. It is given as a free gift. Faith is the acceptance of the gift, which means the surrender of our own presumed goodness. Faith is the acceptance of the divine acceptance of oneself, the unacceptable.

Our selfish pride would deny us such grace, for the surrender of such pride is far more painful than the pain of moral toil or ascetic self-torture or any other way of self-salvation. *—the Editor*

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ACCEPTANCE AND FELLOWSHIP: *DE FACTO* AND *DE JURE*

Those Latin words, *de facto* and *de jure* may not be everyday terms to you, but you will find them meaningful in the way I am using them. They are usually used together and are distinguished from each other in that the first means "in actual fact" while the other means "by right or by law." Governments are often so described in that the ruling party may "in actual fact" be running the country, though not "by right or by law." So the coup that takes over would be the *de facto* government, while the exiled authorities would be the *de jure* government in that while they are the legal rulers they are not the actual rulers.

Sometimes we have *de facto* members of the family in that they take their place alongside the *de jure* ones. Many a child has been "in actual fact" a member of the family, though never a legal one.

Now that you have the words down, I will apply them to a Church of Christ in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area that is not only one of our largest and fastest growing but also one of our most changing churches. I will not name the church because I will allow them to make these facts known in their own way and own time. When baptized believers from other churches, whether it be Baptist, Methodist or Roman Catholic, seek membership, they are accepted, whether sprinkled or immersed. The unimmersed are welcomed as members, treated as members, with no lines drawn.

While they do not, I am calling this *de facto* acceptance and membership. Like the "child" in the family, the *de facto* member of that church may live and die in that church and never be immersed. They are not always "preaching" to him, nor do they limit his activities, such as to forbid his teaching a class, until he is immersed. He is "in actual fact", *de facto*, a member.

Yet the church does make a *de jure* distinction (again, my term, not theirs) in that they are "captives of the Word" and being persuaded that immersion is the proper mode of baptism they continue to bear witness to this without compromise. They are *de facto* accepting the "sprinkled" Presbyterian as a fellow Christian, but *de jure*, by right of Scripture, they remain true to their convictions and continue to preach and practice baptism by immersion for the remission of sins — always of course in a loving and accepting way. And they often immerse folk that were long since accepted as members.

And the *de jure* attitude is strong. They direct their new members, the sprinkled and immersed alike, into classes where the basics of the faith are taught.

While some may think of this as "Open membership," a term now opprobrious among some of us, it can better be viewed as a balanced and realistic position. Open membership advocates often take an imbalanced view, one that lacks the *de jure* in that immersion is no longer taken seriously. They have no particular commitment to immersion, or at least they see no need to lead the unimmersed to be immersed, "a restoration of the ancient order" being no longer important to them. The other extreme allows only for the *de jure* attitude, a legalism that draws the line on all the unimmersed. Not only are the unimmersed not allowed membership, but they are not even recognized as Christians.

The balanced view is both *de facto* and *de jure*. It recognizes what is clearly obvious around the world: there are many Christians beside ourselves, both immersed and unimmersed, and they are often more devoted to Christ than we are. We should accept them *de facto* as such, welcoming them to our churches as fellow Christians, which enriches our fellowship and makes us truly a catholic church. But still we stand firm by what we believe the Bible to teach about baptism, leaving it to each one to respond to that truth as he comes to see it.

The *de facto* attitude does not presume that prospective members have to be questioned about their baptism. They are accepted "as is" on the basis of their loyalty to Jesus Christ. We may not even know whether they are immersed or not, and there is no scriptural injunction that makes it any of our business. We accept them because of their faith, because we can see our Lord in them. I have had fellowship with fellow believers around the world, but I never stop to make an inquiry into their baptism before I enjoy their fellowship.

What is our business? To be a witnessing community for Jesus Christ, to accept all those he accepts, and to honor him as the head of the Body rather than to presume the church is ours to preside over. But loyalty to Christ means that we preach and teach his word, and this includes what we believe to be the truth about baptism. This we will never compromise, not for a moment. This is the *de jure* attitude that gives balance to the *de facto*. Immersion *is* important to us. We *do* believe in the ancient order and in restoring it in our churches. But we do not have to wait until other believers attain our level of understanding and practice before we accept them, *fully*, with no strings attached.

This balanced view is consistent with a plea for unity, and I am certain that we will immerse more people and come nearer being His true Body with this position than either an exclusivism that makes us the only Christians or an inclusivism that treats baptism as inconsequential. It was precisely the view of Barton Stone, if not that of Alexander Campbell, who never made immersion a test of fellowship. And yet in defending his position Stone observed that "there is not one in 500 among us that is not immersed." Stone did not *preach* baptism but Christ. And yet within an atmosphere of acceptance and fellowship he eventually immersed more people than those with only a *de jure* attitude.

For this approach I am indebted to that old British pioneer scholar, William Robinson, and to Jess Johnson, retired president of Milligan College, for reminding me of Robinson's essay on the subject. While visiting with the Church of Christ in Sweet Home, Oregon, with which Dr. Johnson labors in his retiring years, I had occasion to present my views on

baptism and fellowship. Jess told me afterwards that my position was the same that Robinson had pled for long ago in his *The Shattered Cross,* in which he made the *de facto* and *de jure* distinction.

In said book Robinson observes that our forebears were neither inclusivists nor exclusivists but that they had a balanced attitude that embraced both unity and restoration. Here is a pertinent paragraph from his trenchant pen:

> To me the matter cannot be understood unless we see that in it there is a *de facto* and a *de jure* attitude. *De facto,* we can all recognise each other's Churchmanship, whatever the things which divide us. But this does not mean that we can say that just anything is Christianity or Christian, as if there was no *objective* thing, Christianity. What it does mean is that we are judges of no man's conscience and that we allow all to be as sincere as we ourselves claim to be . . . But *de jure,* in those things where we claim to have discovered the true lineaments of the One Body, and to have discarded accretions which are aberrations of original Christianity, we must stand firm within our own borders.

Robinson goes on to explain what restoration really meant to our pioneers: ". . . these early teachers did not mean that the New Testament contained a 'blue print' of the Church, complete in all its details. Unfortunately men of lesser minds have too often thought of the matter in this way." But still the pioneers, he notes, saw within the New Testament *objective* things, such as the Gospel and the Church, which were given of God and have permanent significance, which are to be distinguished from those things that are temporary. And so Robinson speaks of "the very essence and principles of the Gospel and the Church," which must not be distorted into a rule of thumb legalism.

This says it well. There are real and objective truths and institutions in the church of the New Covenant Scriptures, one of which is baptism as "the washing of regeneration." We can never compromise the meaning of such an ordinance, and we must always teach it faithfully and lovingly. This is the *de jure* attitude, which saves us from such an open view of things that nothing really matters much.

This is balanced by the *de facto* attitude, which recognizes that there are sincere differences even on baptism, and that we will not wait until other believers see the ordinance exactly like we do before we accept them. But in accepting them we are no less loyal to "the very essence and principles of the Gospel and the Church" as we understand them.

With this balanced attitude we can share and grow in the fellowship of the Spirit with all those who have responded to the call of Jesus, "Come, follow me." —*the Editor*

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WHAT 48 MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BELIEVE

Would you suppose that 100% of Church of Christ folk would give top priority to preaching the grace and mercy of God, while only 35% would give top priority to the minister preaching on Sunday night? Would it surprise you that only 28% believe that instrumental music is forbidden by the Scriptures and that 61% see missionary societies as either optional or scriptural (only 7% believe them to be forbidden). Would you believe that 85% would not answer as true that "Denominational churches are outside the kingdom of God"? That the vast majority do not condone withdrawing fellowship from those who speak in tongues and that only 6% believe it to be sinful to break bread on a day beside Sunday?

The survey was conducted by Richard N. Ady, minister to the Sonoma Ave. Church of Christ in Santa Rosa, Ca., and the views are 48 of those in his congregation. I sat in on the session at the Pepperdine Lectureship where he reported his findings, and he permitted us to use them.

Most of the figures did not surprise me, but I would not have thought that far more (more than 90%) would object to women elders and even women serving the Communion than object to instrumental music and societies. And there was more objection to having women as deacons than to either organs or societies! And the women were responding as well as the men.

While we are hearing from only 48 people in one congregation, it is probable that the figures would not be greatly different if they were taken nationwide, though I would like to see this and am making some effort to have the same survey taken in "typical" Texas churches.

In many ways the results reveal what would be expected from bedrock conservative Church of Christ folk, such as a disapproval of the Equal Rights Amendment, euthanasia, and genetic engineering, but thunderous approval of capital punishment and tough laws

against drunk driving. While they overwhelming believe in birth control, they strongly object to issuing contraceptives to unmarried girls. They disapprove of dancing, smoking marijuana (even for medicinal purposes), and smoking generally. They are overwhelmingly anti-abortion, except when the mother's life is in danger, and almost 90% are opposed to laws protecting gays and lesbians.

None of these attitudes on social issues is surprising, but one would not suppose that only two of them would say that moderate drinking was forbidden (though almost half of them considered it "inadvisable"), while the bare majority saw it as "optional." Not a single one approves of gambling and they are divided down the middle on Christians bearing arms.

On doctrine there are obviously a lot of dead issues in spite of efforts to keep them alive, such as instrumental music and societies. As we discussed the results in class I pointed out that it ought to say something to us that the very two issues that supposedly divided us from the Christian Church a century ago are now dead horses. No one seemed to protest the position taken at Ady's church. The ones who heard the report would have apparently responded the same way.

They stand as one on the basics: there is one God, the Bible as the inerrant word of God, the one church, the one faith, baptism for the remission of sins (though five of them equivocated). Not a single one would say that demons are *not* active today and most believe that God still works miracles.

I was especially impressed that the two highest priority items were the Sunday morning assembly and the preaching of the grace of God. Our folks believe that they have a pre-arranged engagement with the Lord of glory in the Lord's day assembly (not so much Sunday night), and this is very important to them. Equally important is that the love and grace of God be preached from the pulpit. They are tired of all the negative stuff, such as being denounced on Sunday a.m. for not being on hand the previous Wednesday night, or for being relieved of their teaching duties because they do not say precisely the right thing about instrumental music.

The Church of Christ leadership needs to sit up and take notice. The pew is far ahead of the pulpit and the people are more advanced in "pure and undefiled religion" than their elders.

At this point in time our people are still patient with a non-progressive and reactionary leadership, but in time they will demand something more, something better.

A hint from 48 of our sisters and brothers to the wise should be sufficient. And it is more than a hint. —*the Editor*

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Travel Letter . . .

THE WEST COAST: BACK TO BACK

When I leave home to "get out amongst them" I go east and midwest more often than not. I do not often go as far west as the coast, but this year I was in Oregon twice, back to back, and while I was at it I took in part of California, particularly Malibu, where I attended the Pepperdine Bible Lectureship for the first time ever. This was the 41 st annual lectureship and there was one brother on hand who has attended everyone of them, which means, if nothing else, that he is at least 41 years old. Somehow, even California doesn't seem that old to me, one reason being that it is next to impossible to meet a native-born Californian who still lives there. But in San Francisco I did it in the home of Bob and Lonnie Guinn. The entire family is California born!

My first trip to Oregon in April was to be on the program of the Greater Douglas County Christian Rally in Sutherlin. The greatest value of such gatherings is that they help to assimilate people who would otherwise see little of each other, and they help to anchor some of the worthier traditions. Some annual conventions around the nation are a century or more old, which lend continuity to our Movement. At Sutherlin we studied both history and Scripture and the spirit was excellent.

It is always delightful to visit the older churches along the way, which I did following the rally when I addressed First Christian Church in Roseburg, where Lynnton Elwell ministers. It was a great fellowship. Their response to my presentation on "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" made me want to launch a week's revival. One sister folded a love note in my hand as I departed, which told me how much she appreciated this journal.

After a Chinese dinner with Lynnton and his wife Lois, I hitched a ride to Grants Pass, Or. with Bill and Carrie Jessup, who had come to the rally from California. At Grant's Pass I had a glorious visit with Harry Robert Fox, who was born of missionary parents in Japan

and who has ministered in that country for much of his life, being completely versed in the language. Since I had visited among our Japanese brethren recently, Harry Robert and I had a good time comparing notes. In a very real sense he is Japanese and of course understands how they think. It says something for the quality of his ministry that his frequent sojourns to that nation are sponsored by the Japanese themselves rather than Americans. His love for the Japanese, yea, his love for us all, seemed to radiate the room. Harry Robert's life has been taken captive by the grace of God. It is refreshing to be in the presence of one who has extravagantly received the free gift.

Since I was resolved not to miss seeing the famed redwoods this time around, I traveled surface all the way to San Francisco, along the California coast. Harry Robert drove me to Eureka where I checked into a motel and visited old acquaintances, including Herman Cannon, an old warrior Church of Christ preacher who in recent years has taken refuge in the Assemblies of God after being scored by his erstwhile brethren as truant from the truth. I notice that those among us who best understand the sectarian mind are those who were once sectarians themselves.

Herman's son, Bob Cannon, also a preacher among us for a longtime, is now pastor to the fast-growing Bethel Church in Eureka, which is an Assembly of God. We lost one of the best when we lost Bob, but now I speak as a sectarian, for he is not lost to the church at all, but is simply laboring where he can be supported and appreciated for his efforts. Bob was the minister at the Inglewood Church of Christ just prior to Pat Boone's excommunication, but was a missionary to Africa at the time. He was consulted about Pat and all the way from Africa he gave his blessings to the expulsion. He sees that differently now. We recalled the night when we stood together alongside Pat's pool and watched as he immersed several Jews into the name of the Messiah. One of the shameful chapters in Church of Christ history was its incapacity to assimilate its "charismatics." We lost fare more than a few hundred people. We lost part of our integrity as a unity people and we lost part of the witness of the Holy Spirit. That is far too much to lose in the name of "sound doctrine." But I do not count the likes of Herman and Bob Cannon as in any sense lost, and they are my brothers as much as ever.

I found the redwoods reverential. I was awed by both their antiquity and their modernity. Some are as old as the pyramids and far more majestic. One has the feeling that if he tarried long enough they might speak to you, but it would probably be in an unknown tongue. Who can fancy an old redwood giant speaking English? But I like the younger and slimmer ones the best. They remind me of Ouida — always there, always growing, always beautiful. Too, the younger ones probably speak English!

If ever you get the chance you must do as I did and take the bus down highway 101 from Eureka to San Francisco, which begins with a run through the "Highway of the Giants" and ends with the crossing of the Golden Gate bridge. From the bridge San Francisco, perched on its uneven hills and dressed mostly in white, resembles some ancient mythical city. One might even think he was approaching heaven, even if they are hosting the Democratic convention there this year.

It was a bit of heaven staying with the Guinns, where we had "a dirty dozen" gathering. Hungry for good news, they were pleased to hear a lot of the good things going on, "free" things, that 1 happen to know about.

A visit to our coastland, whether Oregon or California, should convince anyone that our nation is one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

From San Francisco I flew to Los Angeles where I was met by Reg Westmoreland, an old friend from Denton who is now on the Pepperdine faculty. Reg and Mary and their son David, who is a senior at Pepperdine, are cliff-dwellers, perched as they are in a condominium high over the college campus. From their residence one looks out on the deep-blue Pacific in all her majesty, except that he is looking *south,* not west toward Japan. Find Malibu on the map and you will see.

I went to Malibu to visit the Westmorelands, the Lectureship being icing on the cake, though it turned out to be part of the cake itself since the program was really super. It was strongly biblical, practical, and nonsectarian, such as John Willis' study of Job and Carroll Osburn's classes in preaching. At Pepperdine I saw the "new" Church of Christ, even more than at Abilene, and the difference in atmosphere from such places as Freed-Hardeman is striking. One would suppose it was a different denomination.

One reason for this is that Pepperdine always goes first class, whereas on the average our folk do well to make third class, if we rank at all. Movies are shot on its elegant campus, celebrities gather in its halls, and even the Olympics will use its facilities this summer. In preparation for the multi-billion TV audience the university is preparing a grassy knoll that will allow the cameras to pick up in the distance the name PEPPERDINE in living, grassy colors. At Malibu, if no where else, we have class!

Another reason is that Pepperdine is "Church of Christ" only in the sense that a becoming-great university can be. Bill Banowsky, one of the founding presidents, told me himself at Bethany that he could not build both a "Church of Christ university" and a great

university. For this reason the school does not make denominational affiliation a faculty test! and so no more than one-fourth of the faculty is Church of Christ. This not only allows the university to gather the most qualified faculty possible, but in some cases the most spiritual. One professor at Pepperdine, an Assembly of God man if I remember correctly, is highly respected by the students for his deep spirituality and they are not surprised when he opens his classes with prayer even in teaching a "secular" subject. Abilene or Lipscomb would miss such a teacher since they make "a religious test" for the faculty. In fact these schools will and *do* fire even Church of Christ professors if they go to the wrong church! Alas for us when we have a religion that makes us *sound* while denying a dedicated teacher his civil rights! You can see what Banowsky meant.

A few weeks later I was off to Oregon again, this time to address the Rally for the upcoming Oregon Christian Convention, which soon celebrates a century of ministry. The 700 that gathered enjoyed a great fellowship, and they seemed to appreciate my telling them how to both spell and pronounce my wife's name as they did my address on "The Way is the Way to Unity." In this address I set forth for the first time a proposition that I hope will be seriously considered: *We should make nothing a test of fellowship concerning which equally sincere, equally informed, equally spiritual believers generally disagree.* Or, to put it another way, we can unite upon those general truths of the faith regarding which there is virtually unanimous agreement.

I also spoke at Northwest Christian College and Sweet Home Church of Christ, where I was with such old friends as Bill Hayes, Bud Grogan, Jess Johnson, and Ken Johnston.

Now I am preparing to visit my son's Church of Christ in Chillicothe, Mo. (his first job!) and then Union Church, non-denominational, in San Salvador. Ouida says I can't go to the latter place even though our U. S. Embassy friends assure us safety. I'll let you know how that turns out. If she lets me go it will be for over two weeks, and I should have a lot of things to tell you about. —*the Editor*

One of the major signs of decadence in the Roman Empire was that its unwanted babies were exposed, that is, abandoned to die. Can we claim that Western society is any less decadent because it consigns its unwanted babies to the hospital incinerator instead of the local rubbish heap? —*John R. W. Stott*

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REVOLUTION OR EVOLUTION?

Cecil Hook

It's a typical catch-all auditorium class with many who have been "studying" the word for forty years. The lesson is 1 Timothy:6. I question, "Would it be sinful for me to own a slave?" As heads shake negatively, one answers, "No. Paul does not condemn slavery." "Then it would be proper for me to buy a slave," I propose. "Yes," with more agreeing nods. "If it is all right for me to purchase a person enslaved by others, then it would be in order for me to capture and enslave another human being," I argue. The class is quieter with fewer affirming nods. "Would it be acceptable for me to enslave you, Charlie?" I press. Good old legalistic Charlie boldly contends that I would be within my scriptural rights. "It would be sinful for me to own a slave," I propose. "Slavery is not condemned in the Bible," Charlie protests with flushing face, "and you can't pervert the scriptures to make it wrong!"

Yes, for me, it would be sinful to own a slave. I make this assertion being fully aware of the teachings addressed to slaves and masters in the scriptures. Let me explain my contention, and you will see that this is not just a revival of the slavery issue, which is no longer relevant. It involves something basic to the understanding of some other scriptural matters.

We often review and stress the stringent demands of discipleship which bring a sword instead of peace, and set a man at such variance from others that he must make a choice between Christ and others. Our emphasis that demands a clear-cut and immediate break from all that is inferior and wrong at the moment of repentance before baptism is a contention demanding maturity at birth. It would allow for no period of growth. It would condition salvation on our ability to become perfect in conduct rather than being a sinner saved by grace. And, more to the point of this discussion, it would make Jesus a revolutionist.

Revolution is a sudden, radical, or complete change and would be characterized by overthrow, renunciation, and revolt. While Jesus' teachings and demands were radical enough to arouse opposition in many instances, he avoided unnecessary opposition. His will was to be accomplished in a more evolutionary manner - a process of gradual and relatively peaceful social and religious change brought about by seed, leaven, and flavoring salt.

On Pentecost, if Peter had demanded that his Jewish audience renounce the Law of Moses as a condition of salvation, his "visible responses" would more likely have been 3,000 persons "coming forward" with stones to silence Peter and his crowd forever. But God gave time for change from the Law to be accomplished. Although Jesus declared that he did not come to destroy the Law, our traditional explanations about it meeting its end by being nailed to the cross sound more destructive and disruptive than fulfilling and evolutionary. Many years passed before the Law was growing old, obsolete, and ready to vanish away. Even when Paul returned to Jerusalem and was imprisoned, the Judean disciples were all zealous to keep the Law. It was not demanded that they all revolt against the Law, thus arousing undue opposition.

When Roman soldiers asked John, "What shall we do?" (Lk. 3:14), he did not tell them that they must resign from or desert their military machine trained in killing, conquering, and subjugating. For that moment, he simply answered, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." He did not mark himself as a political activist against Rome. Can even the most hawkish among us really believe that Jesus wants us to train to aggressively conquer, kill, and enslave? I think not. But he planted seeds of reformation in his answer. In time, the leaven of his word should eliminate such warfare, or make it sinful, to say the least. Unfortunately, the need for self-defense is still with us, and he would not deny us that right. But aggression is denied to any who would mature in the spirit of his teachings.

Paul urged the Corinthians, "Only, let everyone lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him" (1 Cor. 7:17). Whether it be marriage or lack of marriage, circumcision or lack of circumcision, or freedom or slavery, Paul did not demand a change in these social relationships. There were no shocking demands to upset the social order. He concludes, "So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God." Yet we know that in other circumstances these conditions could be changed acceptably, for a person was permitted to marry, be circumcised, or become free.

Paul further warns the Corithian disciples against brazen disregard of social customs, and it would have made them exclusivists unnecessarily. But advocating the use of the kiss did not bind a ritualistic procedure for all time to come.

Because of centuries of cultural conditioning, ancient peoples could hardly conceive of a person going through a period of emotional trauma or religious experience without fasting. For Jesus to have scoffed at fasting and to have disclaimed its value would have turned sincere people away from him needlessly. But acceptance of fasting by Jesus and his disciples did not elevate it to a legal demand in other times and societies. Growth in spiritual discernment would diminish the value of such a physical exercise. And we would view the traditional expression of hospitality through washing of feet from the same perspective as that of fasting and the kiss.

When Peter instructed, "Honor the king," he was not binding the monarchical form of government upon people for all time. But, lest Christianity be considered as an anti-governmental force, disciples were urged to accept the political system in which they were called. Through the evolving of circumstances, however, we may rightly help to change or remove the officials over us. If Jesus had called for upheaval of tyrannical government, it would have marked him and his religion as revolutionary and bent on social reform rather than individual salvation.

Now, let's get back to our thoughts about slavery. Paul insists, "Do not become slaves of men" (1 Cor. 7:23). If it is wrong for me to become a slave, it is wrong for me to enslave someone else. No amount of legalism or rationalization can harmonize the Golden Rule with slavery, for no person wants to be enslaved. Through the working of the Golden Rule, this great social change was to evolve. To have demanded that social change as a pre-requisite of accepting Christ would have made for upheaval and revolution which would have been detrimental to the cause.

God wants change in all individuals and societies. He does not, however, demand or expect that change to be an immediate leap from depravity to perfection. He accepts the individual as he is where he is when that person resolves to follow the Savior to a nobler life and commits himself to that life of faith and obedience. From then and there, he will evolve and grow, and outgrow many things of ignorance and immaturity that were once overlooked by a merciful Savior. Conduct of a mature disciple is not demanded of a new-born in Christ; neither is infancy an acceptable standard for those who have had time and opportunity to grow toward the fullness of Christ.

The foregoing discussion allows for flexibility in the requirements and restrictions of Jesus. The legalist can't tolerate flexibility. But the legalist could still feel free to buy him a slave! —*1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX 78130*

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BOOK NOTES

While they are especially for women, everyone may delight in a new series by Westminister Press on *Choices: Guides for Today's Woman.* There are several attractive volumes, brief (about 120 pages) and easy-to-read: *Identity* (Who Am I?); *Sexuality Sexuality* (Affirm sexuality as God's gift); *Nuture* (Care effectively for' others and your-self); *Emotions* (Live creatively with your feelings); *Roles* (How to balance man different relationships); *Other People* (Get along well with those around you); *Singleness* (the joy of single living). These are 5.95 each, postpaid. They sparkle with relevance. If you order one, you are likely to want the others. The authors are all women.

The Meanest Man in Texas, published by a major publisher (Thomas Nelson), is the shocking story of Clyde Thompson, who gained the infamy of being Texas' meanest man both for the murders he committed and the betrayals and brutality he inflicted on fellow prisoners in the Texas penal system. Then a wonderful change in his life was wrought. He became a minister (Church of Christ) and spent many years as a prison chaplain. This true story was written by Don Umphrey, who teaches at Texas Tech U. 6.95 postpaid.

By way of special purchase we can send you the 18-vol. *Daily Bible Study* on the NT by the late William Barclay at 20% discount, which means a price of 83.00, postpaid.

Who is for Life? (Mother Teresa, Francis Schaeffer, Malcolm Muggeridge, John R. W. Stott, et al) is a judgment on abortion that may startle you, worry you, or anger you, but you will find it informative. 2.95 postpaid.

Interpreting Revelation, by Merrill Tenney, may be the most important book you can read on the Bible's most perplexing book. 9.95 postpaid.

Memoirs of Alexander Campbell by Robert Richardson is still in print at 21.95 postpaid, and it remains the most important work on our heritage. A new book, *Crying in the Wilderness*, a biography of David Lipscomb, by Robert Hooker, deals with a much more recent period of our history, and is informative on Church of Christ beginnings. 12.95 postpaid.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

One of the Churches of Christ in Austin has had a problem with “Street-walkers” in its community. The *Austin American-Statesman* called for more legal action, which prompted the police to make more arrests and the judges to impose tougher penalties. The minister sent a letter of appreciation to the newspaper: “We are glad that your efforts have brought some welcomed relief.” He went on to say that he was amazed by “the successful curbing of that element.” One of our readers in the area wonders how Jesus would have responded to such a “community problem.” This should help us to see why the church folk of Jesus’ day, the Pharisees, were embarrassed by his association with such an “element.” Element? Is that people or chemistry?

Kenneth Teegarden, general minister and president of the Disciples of Christ, wrote in a recent issue of *The Disciple* that he doubts that the Bible is the most widely read book in the world. If it were, he says, the message should be getting through better. He even doubts that the Bible is the most widely read book even in the church. And so he is pleased that most of the 475 Disciple churches in their Southwest Region will soon begin comprehensive biblical content courses, based in part upon materials created by Roger Carstensen’s Institute for Biblical Literacy. Having seen these workbooks I am persuaded that they would be ideal for Churches of Christ as well as Disciples. And biblical illiteracy is a very present danger for us all.

The World Convention of Churches of Christ will have its 11th assembly in Kingston, Jamaica, July 17-22. Thirty Christian Churches on the island country will host some 4,000 visitors. I have been nominated to serve on the Executive Committee of WCCC until it meets in Auckland, New Zealand in 1988.

I was with the Church of Christ in Chillicothe, Mo. for a weekend in May, where our son David is youth minister. Since Jim Mabery, the pulpit minister and an old friend, was touring Israel, I was in the pulpit. Speaking at “my son’s church” was a new experience for me since he is fresh out of Abilene and in his first job. I assured Ouida, who needs the assurance, that he is doing very well. One lady told me that when David fasted and prayed for three days for her sick little girl she was healed, thus avoiding surgery. Ouida doubts that he learned that at Abilene!

I will spend the first half of June in San Salvador working with the Union Church, an English-speaking community of believers in that troubled land. When I explained to Ouida that since I do not have many years left that I want to go to more of such places while I can, she responded that if I keep going to places like San Salvador that I might have even fewer years than I suppose. I am confident that all will be well. and I plan to file a report for you for our September issue.

I will join Jim Mabery of Chillicothe, Mo. as the teachers for the Macrorie Family Camp at Outlook, Sask., Canada, July 26-31. Our Canadian brethren come from far and wide for a great fellowship in the Lord. The setting is refreshingly primitive, with not so much as electricity or running water, and has been kept that way deliberately through the years. For more information write to David Hockley, Box 549, Outlook, Sask. SOL 2ND.

Arnold Hardin, editor of *The Persuader,* 2920 Prairie Creek, Dallas 75227, charges in a recent issue that Churches of Christ are not really interested in unity. Even though Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples, he notes, unity hardly finds a place on our prayer lists. Moreover, he observes, any effort toward unity has come to be viewed as a form of liberalism. It has gone so far in some circles, he laments, that one is considered as an apostate if he even attends a unity meeting. He explains why Churches of Christ have lost a million members over the past 25 years: “We have been so busy tearing each other apart that we have lost a proper sense of what we are all about. Instead of taking Christ to a lost world we hid Him under our warfare over traditions. He will add you to his mailing list for the asking.

Gary Taliaferro in his church bulletin (Friendswood Church of Christ, Box 616, Friendswood, Tx. 77546) also writes about unity, outlining seven steps we can all take: (1) strive for a genuine love toward those with whom we differ; (2) pray for them and keep a mental list of their good traits; (3) try to picture yourself as others see you; (4) make the situation more Christ-centered; (5) be open and honest; (6) pray with and for those with whom you differ; (7) spend time with them.

This interest in unity is growing momentum. Rubel Shelly, before thousands at the Tulsa Workshop recently, raised the question, Do we really want unity? “Do we want it badly enough to pray for it?, he asked, and went on to say that if we really wanted it we would reach out more to those with whom we differ.

Those who would like to listen in on some highly resourceful courses, taught by that excellent teacher, Steve Eckstein of the Church of Christ Bible Chair, Eastern New Mexico University, are advised to write him at Box 2044, Portales, NM 88130. By cassette tape, for instance, you can sit in on the history of Judaism, American Christianity, and various biblical studies. Write for details.

As this issue goes to press we regret to inform you that on June 3 Ouida called me home from San Salvador because of the death of our three-year old granddaughter, Christi. That Sunday afternoon she drowned in a stock tank while visiting with her paternal grandparents. She was more than our granddaughter, for she had become our very own since we kept her most of the time since the death

(also by drowning) of her father in her infancy. We are both devastated almost beyond repair, but the heavenly Father is sustaining us and we are aware of his suffering love. In our almost unbearable grief we must minister to the living, to Christi's troubled mother, our daughter Phoebe; and to Christi's nine-year old brother, Ashley, who witnessed his father's death. Ouida finds solace in her conviction that Christi has been "delivered" from what would have been a tragic life, her problems being what they were. But Ashley insists that it must have been the devil that did it, for surely God would not have done such a thing. And the other grandparents are blaming themselves. So just now the lights have gone out and it is dark, but they will come back on, for the Light of the world shines on, eventually penetrating the darkest clouds.

Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns, a renewal movement within the United Presbyterian Church, is especially vocal on social issues. On abortion it "affirms the sanctity of human life and the right of all human life and the right of all human beings to the protection of that life from conception to natural death."

When President Reagan addressed the National Religious Broadcasters Convention he also spoke on abortion: "This nation cannot continue turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the taking of some 4,000 unborn children's lives every day. One every 21 seconds. We cannot pretend that America is preserving her first and highest ideal, the belief that each life is sacred, when we've permitted the deaths of 15,000,000 helpless innocents since the Roe versus Wade decision."

One of the professors at Abilene Christian University gave a speech in chapel in praise of Martin Luther, a kind of gift to the reformer on his 400th birthday anniversary. It is safe to assume that many in the audience would have no problem in accepting Martin Luther as a brother in Christ, even if he was never baptized by immersion. The next thing we may hear from Abilene is that some of our folk will be giving tribute to Luther *at a Lutheran Church* — like the Pope John Paul did! Is our world changing too fast for you?

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READERS' EXCHANGE

We enjoy good fellowship with the conservative Christian Church folks. In fact we have had two of their preachers hold meetings for us. Church of Christ folk need to learn that being kind and loving does not mean you condone what they have done or what they

believe. Jesus showed kindness to the woman at the well in In. 8 but he did not condone her sin. —*Antoine Valdetero, Jennings, La.*

I don't like what I see going on among our most conservative brethren these days. When J. D. Bales and Rubel Shelley are pursued by the mob for being "liberals," just where does that leave guys like you and me? You are the eternal optimist, so speak to me. —*Jim Sims, Oelwein, IO.*

(We are a changing people, mostly for the good. That is why Bales and Shelley are being pursued and called names. They are changing. Even the "conservatives" are changing. They have to survive. Some move along slowly but at their own will. Others are carried along by the tide, kicking and screaming. —*Ed.*)

Thanks for the lessons we heard last week-end in Oregon. Our friends were correct when they told us that you were extremely encouraging. While we enjoyed your comments at First Christian in Roseburg on Sunday, we especially needed your comments on Friday evening in Sutherlin. I wish all of us Christians could love each other and accept each other with our individual uniqueness, but I don't believe that day will ever come, since we human beings are what we are. —*Bob and Charlene Howard, Myrtle Creek, Or.*

(Never doubt that the love and unity that our Lord prayed for will come. It is coming even now in the lives of multiplied thousands including you and me. —*Ed.*)

Restoration Proclamation is a newsletter designed to inform people, particularly those who are unaware of Restoration history, of the need to exalt Christ, using the Bible as our guide. —*David L. Burns, editor, Box 82, Browning, IL 62624.*

One woman walked two miles with her five children and asked for medicine for worms and itch. The itch had made sores and were badly infected. Two of the children were twin boys less than a year old. Mim treated them for worms and sent itch medicine home with them. An alligator ate three people at Tikal Village where the people go to get water. Orders are to kill the alligator —*J. C. Reed, Flores, Peten, Guatemala.*

We are excited about the Amsterdam Convention report as Carl Ketcherside tells it. We re-read your reports from the faraway places. For several years we have sent support to a little girl in Bangladesh through World Vision. This includes her education in a Christian school. But our preacher thinks this is wrong since it is not done "through the church treasury." —*Marguerite McFadden, Dumas, Texas.*

(It is interesting how devotion to "going by the Bible" can actually blind us. Here is a preacher who believes it wrong to do deeds of mercy unless it be through the church treasury. And where, pray tell me, is there even a church treasury in the Scriptures? —*Ed.)*

Our more recent subscribers might like to see what we have been saying in years past. We will send you 18 back issues, selected at random, for only 3.00. These are mailed but once a month, so you must be patient.

Please inform us in advance of any change of address, and you *must* send us both your old and new addresses. If you move and the post office has to inform us, we remove your name from our mailing list.

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The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches by Leroy Garrett is widely hailed as readable, interesting, and informative (and controversial!). There are two good ways to get a copy from us: purchase a copy at 21.95 (postpaid if you pay in advance); or receive a bonus copy by sending us eight subs to this journal at 3.00 per name (24.00 total).

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You will remember that we do not publish in July or August. The September number will be our next issue.

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